INCOMING TELEGRAM Department of State

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Control: 2922
Rec'd: June 5, 1954
11:28 p.m.

FROM: Guatemala City

TO: Secretary of State

NO: 903, June 5, 6 p.m.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF
INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS
JUN - 6 1954

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Pro-government forces seemed to be capturing initiative in Guatemala's "war of nerves" as Communist influenced labor and peasant organizations started mobilizing their followers to support government, authorities continued arresting persons suspected of implication in revolutionary movements and eight anti-Communist left country under safe conduct after taking asylum in diplomatic missions.

First move in government counteroffensive was search of houses and arrest of suspected persons (EMBTEL 848, May 31). This was followed on June 2 by Interior Minister Charnaud MacDonald's announcement of discovery of plot against government (EMBTEL 873, June 2). Then on June 4 press reported that Leonardo Castillo Flores, secretary general of peasant organization CNCG, had sent circular telegram to provincial affiliates instructing them to be alert for moves by reactionary elements and stating that CNCG headquarters would inform them of any developments so they could "fight enemies". Wire said delegates would be sent to give instructions and concluded "we will firmly defend democratic liberties with glorious army of the revolution".

In further statements today CNCG announced meeting would be held tomorrow in Guatemala City, El Progreso and Jutiapa to decide on measures to be taken against "the reactionaries and the interventionists" and create basis for future peoples army.

Taking prematurely alarmist view, PRENSA LIBRE headlined story of CNCG telegram, "Danger Of A Saint Bartholomew Seen In CNCG Circular" and EL IMPARCIAL editorialized more calmly "will not formation of peasant brigades increase insecurity?"

Government owned DIARIO DE CENTRO AMERICA June 4 carried report of organizing "revolutionary guard" in Solola to join national army in defense of Arbenz government. In note to President this group asked for military instructions so that in moment of danger they could be given arms.

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CNCG also sent message to President Arbenz urging him to act energetically against enemies of revolution and stating labor ready to sacrifice lives. While it is

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While it is possible that this offensive by pro-Communist organizations is designed primarily to demonstrate mass support of government and intimidate opposition by playing on fear of massacre of middle class elements, possible secondary motive is providing excuse for government distribution of arms to civilians under guise of responding to public demand. Inclusion in most statements of phrase indicating desire to support army could be intended overcome opposition army officers to arming civilian groups. Despite rumors, there is as yet no credible information that army is turning over arms to labor and peasant organizations.

Arrests recently reported included Gabriel Martinez del Rosal, active anti-Communist formerly connected with Committee of Anti-Communist University Students; Alberto Merlos, secretary general of Anti-Communist Workers Committee; and Emilio Conde Valero, employee of IRCA railway.

Gilberto Morales, IRCA employee whose arrest reported EMBTEL 873, June 2, was released after two nights in jail where he was questioned about alleged complicity railroad officials in attempt to blow up railway bridges as part of plot against government (EMBTEL 723, May 20).

Among the eight persons who left country yesterday were Hector and Domingo Goicolea (EMBTEL 848, May 31), Jose Bernabe Linares, chief of police in 1944 under Ponce, and Rodolfo Rewold, editor of anti-Communist students publication EL REBELDE. Rodrigo Cordova Cerna, brother of Juan Cordova Cerna, exiled anti-Communist leader, and Manuel Orellana, anti-Communist attorney were to leave today.

Another move in government's psychological counteroffensive was report published in pro-government press June 4 that clandestine anti-Communist radio station had been captured by Honduran authorities in San Pedro Sula. Besides discouraging opposition, this tale was probably designed to indicate Honduran Government support for Guatemala. Station has been heard since reported capture, so this story will have but passing effect.

Arbenz position has been aided by statements of President Osorio of El Salvador indicating complete neutrality in current situation.

In reviewing events of this week, it appears that campaign by opposition to propagate idea that fall of government was inevitable has lost much of its headway. At end of last week government circles seemed on verge of panic. Now with Communist aid administration is demonstrating it has sinews for defense and intends to use them.

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